Information Seeking Behaviour of Students in Arts and Science Colleges in Salem District

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with the most important aspects of Information Seeking Behavior of the Students. A detailed questionnaire has been circulated to the students of Arts and Science Colleges in the Salem District in order to assess their information seeking behavior. And the data in relation to the availability of information services, major information services used, purpose of seeking the information and the level of satisfaction are analyzed.

The success of a library largely depends on the selection and effective utilization of its resources. The available resources should meet the needs, requirements and demands of the users. Libraries and information centers should take utmost while selecting and acquiring their resources, keeping in view of the demands of their Users. The availability of useful resources within the library will be of useful to greater number of users to their information needs, which in turn will increase the frequency of visits by the users.

KEYWORDS	Information Seeking Behavior, Information sources, Books and journals, Arts and Science Colleges in salem districts.

Introduction

The twenty first century can be considered to be an era of information revolution in the diversify formats. Libraries and information centre's are getting switched to furnish the information in electronic formats to the users in a vast selection. With the collection of information sources available in the library of colleges, the libraries are considered to be the academic heart of the colleges (Odiase, Unegbu, and Haliso 2001).

Information is a valuable input for social development. Information seeking behavior studies is one of the most important areas in user studies. To reduce the thirst for information, users adopt numerous ways and means to access the various channels of information. The different sources involved in generating information are books, periodicals, research papers, technical reports, conference proceedings, dissertations, theses, patents, standards, microforms, electronic media and the like.

Providing information to a user who sees for it, regardless of its format is the essential function of libraries. The information needs, potential, searching behavior and methods of satisfying the needs of the user are different among the various user communities. Therefore academic libraries must understand the information needs of the students in order to address these needs. This study explores the information seeking behavior of students in Arts and Science Colleges in Salem District Affiliated to the Periyar University.

Objectives

This study has been conducted with the following objectives;-

1. To discover the purpose of seeking information by the students
2. To find out the nature of resources available in the library
3. To know the methods used for searching information
4. To find out nature of users
5. To find out most common search engines used by the users
6. To find out the problems faced by the students while seeking information.

Review of Literature

The literature survey reveals that the published literature in this field is enormous and scattered. It was not possible to record all the literature and as such few omissions could not be avoided. Various studies have been carried out to examine the information needs and behavior of different library user groups such as academicians, researchers, graduates and undergraduates, while other studies distinguish between these groups on the basis of their faculty (Hiller, 2002).

Information seeking behavior according to Wilson (2000) entails the totality of human behavior in relation to the sources and channels of information including the active and passive information seeking. In the quest for information, different kinds of behavior are manifested as students are having different reasons for seeking information, different levels of search skill and preference for some types of information bearing materials. Leckie, Pettigrew & Sylvain (1996) affirm that information seeking involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information, which are being sought.

Methodology

A questionnaire was personally designed after literature survey and discussion with the subject experts. A total No. of colleges in Salem District 20 Arts and Science Colleges. A total of 4 Arts and Science Colleges questionnaires were distributed personally to the students, who were present in the library of Arts and Science Colleges in the Salem District. The collected data were analyzed, classified and tabulated by employing statistical methods.

Sample

College Name	Undergraduates Students	Postgraduates Students	Research Scholars
Government arts college	40	30	2
Government arts college for women	40	10	8
Sri Sakthi Kailash college of women	30	15	-

Paavendhar college of arts and science	30	20	-
Total responded	140	75	10

Table 1 indicates that a total 225 questionnaires responded out of 250 and consisted of 140 undergraduate's students, 75 postgraduates students, and 10 researchers from four Arts and Science Colleges of Salem District.

Time spent per week in the library and Reading Room

Time	Under-graduates Students	Postgraduates Students	Research Scholars
Less than 5 hours	25%	29%	72%
5-10 hours	48%	56%	14%
10-20 hours	21%	8%	8%
More than 20hours	6%	7%	2%

Nearly half the undergraduate students and more than half of the postgraduate students spent about 5 to 10 hours per week in the library. Nearly three – quarters of the scholars,

However, spent less than 5 hours per week in the library.

Undergraduate Students satisfaction with Library collection

Type of material	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
Text books	12%	71%	12%	5%
Reference books	48%	34%	16%	2%
Journals	56%	36%	5%	3%
Magazines	71%	24%	3%	2%
Newspapers	76%	24%	0%	0%
Thesis	58%	30%	6%	6%

A majority of undergraduate report a good collection of textbooks in the library, and journals were rated similarly. The collection of reference books, journals and theses was rated very well by nearly half.

Postgraduate Students satisfaction with Library collection

Type of material	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
Text books	54%	27%	12%	7%
Reference books	24%	51%	16%	9%
Journals	74%	21%	3%	2%
Magazines	64%	28%	5%	3%
Newspapers	69%	27%	3%	1%
Thesis	69%	27%	3%	1%

Research Scholars satisfaction with Library collection

Type of material	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
Text books	24%	46%	24%	6%
Reference books	36%	58%	6%	5%
Journals	70%	36%	2%	2%
Magazines	70%	28%	2%	0%
Newspapers	72%	14%	12%	2%
Thesis	52%	42%	1%	5%

A majority of researchers are happy with the availability of journals, magazines, and newspapers, but are not satisfied with textbooks or reference books.

Purpose of information – seeking by Users

Purpose	Undergradu-ates Students	Postgraduates Students	Research Scholars
Reading	68%	52%	44%
Preparing notes	100%	98%	0%
General awareness	50%	56%	72%
Discussions	6%	24%	62%
Research work	0%	84%	100%

Most students seek information to prepare notes for examinations, whereas researchers seek information related to their research. Seeking information for discussions and general awareness is favored more by the researchers than other respondents.

Time spent by Users per week on information gathering

Time	Undergradu-ates Students	Postgraduates Students	Research Scholars
0-2 hours	58%	32%	0%
3-5 hours	38%	46%	4%
6-8 hours	4%	14%	12%
More than 8 hours	0%	8%	84%

It is clear from the table that the researchers spend more than 8 hours per week on information gathering because it is important for their research. Most students spend less time on information gathering because it is provided in the classroom or available in textbooks.

Method of seeking current information by Users

Method	Undergradu-ates Students	Postgraduates Students	Research Scholars
Current issues of Journals	56%	72%	100%
CAS/SDI	14%	14%	23%
Personal com-munication	68%	74%	48%
Seminars / Conferences	24%	56%	92%
Internet	67%	83%	98%

Researchers prefer current issues of journals and the Internet more than students. Although the library provides a current awareness service, it is not fully used. When users were asked about it most, especially students, were not aware of it.

Conclusion

The central role of the library profession remains the same, but methods and tools for information storage and retrieval continue to grow and change considerably. Libraries must understand information seeking behavior of users to their services and provide information efficiently. Library using is must and should be carrying out as a seminar or workshop training.

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